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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES ELECTION DAY BALLOT ACCESS AND INTEGRITY PROGRAM

Shreveport, Louisiana . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced today that his office will implement an Election Day Ballot Access and Integrity Program for the Western District of Louisiana, part of a nationwide effort by the U.S. Justice Department for the upcoming November 7, 2006 general elections.

Four years ago, the Department of Justice established a Department-wide Ballot Access and Voting Integrity Initiative. The goals of this Initiative are to increase the Department's ability to deter election fraud and discrimination at the polls and to prosecute those offenses wherever and whenever they occur. "The goal is to make voting easier and cheating harder," U.S. Attorney Washington stated. "Both goals are equally important. It is imperative that in pursuing voter integrity, ballot access is not in any way diminished or harmed."

The Department's long-standing Election Day Program furthers the goals of the Initiative. The program also is intended to ensure public confidence in the integrity of the election process by providing local points of contact where the public can report possible election fraud and voting rights

violations while the polls are open on election day. U.S. Attorney Washington continued: “The franchise is the cornerstone of American democracy. We must all ensure that those who are entitled to the franchise exercise it, while those who seek to corrupt it are brought to justice.”

In order to respond to complaints of election fraud or voting rights abuses on November 7, 2006, and to ensure that such complaints are directed to appropriate authorities, U.S. Attorney Washington stated lawyers on his staff will be on duty while the polls are open. They can be reached by the public at either 1-800-729-7270 in Shreveport or 1-800-676-6992 in Lafayette.

The FBI will also have Special Agents available in each Resident Agency Office in the district to receive allegations of election fraud and other election abuses. The FBI can be reached by the public at 318-221-8439 in Shreveport; 337-233-2164 in Lafayette; 318-387-0773 in Monroe; 318-443-5097 in Alexandria; and 337-433-6353 in Lake Charles.

Complaints about ballot access problems or discrimination can also be made directly to the Civil Rights Division’s Voting Section in Washington, D.C. at 1-800-253-3931 or 202-307-2767.

U.S. Attorney Washington stated: “Election fraud and voting rights abuses dilute the worth of votes honestly cast. As crimes against both the individual and the government, they will be dealt with promptly and aggressively. Anyone who has information suggesting electoral corruption or voting rights abuses should make that information available immediately to my office, the FBI, or the Civil Rights Division.”

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